

Minutes of the
Edina Park Board
August 11, 2009
Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jennifer Kenney, Ben Pobuda, Todd Fronek, Ray O'Connell, Dan Peterson, Joseph Hulbert, Jeff Sorem, Bill Lough, Keeya Steel, Rob Presthus

MEMBERS ABSENT: Randy Meyer

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Janet Canton, Ed MacHolda

I. APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 17, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Dan Peterson MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE 17, 2009 PARK BOARD MINUTES.
Bill Lough SECONDED. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. Pamela Park Master Plan – Mr. Keprios gave a presentation on the Pamela Park Master Plan and informed the Park Board of what took place at the Pamela Park information meeting on July 30, 2009. He explained the history of the process of how they got to where they currently are. Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that it seemed pretty clear from both written and verbal responses that the number one concern is spending tax dollars on these projects during these challenging economic times. Mr. Keprios then summarized his recommendations from his staff report.

- RELOCATE HOCKEY RINK AND LIGHTS
- WEST PARKING LOT RENOVATION AND EXPANSION
- NEW ATHLETIC FIELD
- SOUTH PARKING LOT EXPANSION
- NORTH PARKING LOT EXPANSION
- NO ARTIFICIAL TURF ON SOUTH ATHLETIC FIELD
- SENIOR ATHLETIC FIELD RENOVATION
- PAVED TRAIL ACCESS TO PLAYGROUND
- PARK SHELTER BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

Ms. Steel asked Mr. Keprios what kind of natural grass he has in mind for the new athletic field. Mr. Keprios replied that they would have to rely on their engineers to tell them what would be most economically feasible. He noted that his first choice would be to go with another sand peat field with irrigation and proper drainage. He noted that it will need to be engineered in a way to be tolerant of a lot of play therefore it will probably need to be a mix between sand peat and natural soils.

Mr. Fronek informed the Park Board that he thought it was a very good process that they went through. He added that Mr. Pobuda, Mr. Peterson, Mr. O'Connell and he attended the Pamela Park neighborhood meeting. Mr. Fronek commented that he thought it was very productive and felt that they sorted through a lot of the issues.

Mr. O'Connell noted that he thought it was very positive. He commented that he would like to see the city and the school system develop a collaborative situation and share the costs. Mr. Pobuda stated that it opened his eyes to more opinions than those of just the Park Board and now he has a good idea of what they want and what they expect from them. Mr. Peterson indicated that he was amazed that the number one issue he heard is that the economy stinks, don't spend the money.

Mr. Fronek asked Mr. Keprios to speak a little bit about the hockey rink because he initially thought it had to be moved because it is in a watershed plain. In addition, there were also issues with getting good ice on the hockey rink as well as they would be losing a lot of the open skating area. Mr. Keprios replied that originally his staff recommended moving the hockey rink 30 feet in order to have a better surface to work with. However, there is a debate on whether the water table is really any different 30 feet to the west. He noted that there is a fairly steep grade east of the hockey boards which would make it fairly tight to walk through for the nature trail. He explained that most times of the year it isn't an issue until they start flooding the rink where it then becomes a dangerous situation of having to walk to the west side of the hockey rink. Mr. Keprios commented that one concern of a resident was that it would consume too much of the open skating area but noted that the reality is they have enough real estate where they could easily expand the open skating area. Mr. Keprios explained that it is not critical for them to move the hockey rink; however, it is just staff's recommendation that by moving it, it would be better for maintenance and it would make for a better nature trail. He pointed out that as long as they need to replace the light standards and bases it just makes sense to move it slightly and make room for the trail.

Mr. O'Connell asked if they do move the hockey rink will it increase the cost figure. Mr. Keprios replied yes, it would cost approximately \$60,000 because they would have to replace quite a few of the boards. He added that to leave the hockey rink in its current location and just replace the broken boards it would cost approximately \$45,000 to fix which \$40,000 of that would be for new light standards. Mr. O'Connell indicated that he thinks the \$15,000 would be a good investment. Mr. Keprios responded that he doesn't disagree with the recommendation but that the reason he came to this conclusion is because so many residents felt strongly that the rink should stay in its current location. However, he does still feel that if they are going to replace the light system then now is the time to move the rink and that is why they made the original recommendation that they did.

Mr. Hulbert asked how old are the boards and what is the life expectancy of the hockey boards? Mr. Keprios replied that hockey boards last approximately 15 years before they have to be rebuilt. He noted that he thinks the Pamela Park hockey rink was built 15 or 16 years ago. Mr. Keprios stated that he doesn't disagree with moving the hockey rink he was just trying to be sympathetic and responsive to the residents.

Mr. Lough asked what is the incremental cost of moving the hockey rink versus not moving it? Mr. Keprios replied it would cost \$60,000 to move it and \$45,000 not to move it. Therefore, it would be a \$15,000 savings. Mr. Presthus asked if the rink is moved would all of the boards be new or would you use some of the existing boards. Mr. Keprios responded they would try to use what boards would still be salvageable.

Ms. Steel commented that she knows people want to save dollars especially in this economy and asked if project costs are down in the current market could money be saved that way. Mr. Keprios replied a lot of their bids today on contracted work are lower than what they typically would be because of the economy.

Mr. Lough asked Mr. Keprios in terms of the overall timing of the priority items how long would you guess it would take to get through all nine items or at least the top five. Mr. Keprios replied that his guess is they are going to be going through some very tough economic times as an organization for a minimum of the next 2 ½ to 3 years. And feels in his view it will be at least three years before they start to come out of this. Mr. Keprios indicated that in his opinion it could be four to five years before they start building new amenities in the parks. He commented that they are going to be in maintenance mode for at least the next few years.

Mr. Keprios noted that maybe they will be able to find enough cuts in other areas and commented that thankfully most of the capital improvement plan funding source does not come from the annual operating budget. He pointed out that it's a pool of money that has been secured over the years which is earmarked specifically for capital improvements. Mr. Keprios explained that thankfully only \$50,000 from the general operating fund goes to fund the capital improvement plan's Revolving Fund which has a balance in the millions; however, the \$50,000 is now being removed from 2010 operating budget. Therefore, there are still Revolving Fund dollars available for capital improvements but he is not sure how much of those funds the Council will approve for use over the next four years and so he cannot fully answer Mr. Lough's questions. Mr. Lough commented that the senior athletic field is not likely to occur in the next four years to which Mr. Keprios replied that is correct. Mr. Lough asked if the paved access trail is likely to occur in the next four years. Mr. Keprios responded that is one he would still like to try to fund out of his Paths and Hard Surfaces operating budget and that is why it doesn't show up in the capital improvement plan. That is one he really feels should be a priority because they need to have accessible path from a parking lot to the playground and he didn't want to have to rely on the capital improvement plan to fund this project.

Mr. Lough asked if it would be possible for one of the parking lot expansions to be an overall priority in the next four years. Mr. Keprios replied that it's possible but again it would have to be funded through the capital improvement plan and not through the operating budget since that's going to get cut severely next year. Mr. Lough asked Mr. Keprios what the payback period would be for the investment in the lights to which Mr. Keprios replied that he wasn't sure but thought it might be approximately 13 or 14 years. He also asked Mr. Keprios if it was likely to be approved by the financial staff or the City Council with that kind of a payback. Mr. Keprios replied that because the investment was green and the city had established a priority to make green expenditures or green investments that he thought it would be fine.

Mr. O'Connell commented that he would like to see the building at Pamela Park be renovated as soon as possible because that is something that would be used a lot.

Mr. Fronek entered a motion regarding Mr. Keprios recommendation with regards to the five-year Pamela Park Improvement Plan. Mr. Peterson MOVED TO APPROVE.

Ray O'Connell SECONDED THE MOTION. Mr. Keprios asked if the recommendation would include moving the hockey rink as he proposed the first go around or leave it where it's at.

Mr. Fronek MOVED TO AMEND MR. KEPRIOS RECOMMENDATION TO RELOCATE THE HOCKEY RINK AS PREVIOUSLY STATED. MOVE IT 30 FEET SOUTH AND 30 FEET WEST. HE NOTED THAT HE WOULD ALSO LIKE MR. KEPRIOS TO AT LEAST EXPLORE ADDING SOME SPACE TO THE OPEN SKATING AREA. Mr. O'Connell accepted the amendment. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

III. OLD BUSINESS

- A. Community Gardens – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that he is still of the opinion that the silent majority would be okay with a policy that suggests we keep our open space as open space. He noted that for those who want to have a vegetable or fruit garden they should do it on their private property. He stated that what they have learned from the past is that open space is just too precious in a town that's a first ring suburb where we are fully developed. Mr. Keprios stated that in addition it would be very difficult to find an ideal space that will please everyone. Therefore, that is what he would ask the Park Board to recommend to the City Council.

Mr. Lough stated that while he is somewhat sympathetic to staff's recommendation on this issue he wants to make sure that as a Park Board they clearly understand that it is their responsibility to try and come up with recommendations which will serve all members of the community. He commented that gardens of this nature typically serve an educational, hobby and social purpose as well as there may be other purposes to add to this list with the exception of any commercial purpose. He noted that the nature of the community in Edina is changing somewhat in that it is an older community which more and more people will reside in multi-family housing. He indicated that green space is meant for all of the citizens and not just for youth sports or people who like to walk and that sort of nature but perhaps for other purposes as well.

Mr. Lough asked Mr. Keprios if they were to adopt a policy that does not approve the community gardens and it goes to the City Council and they do approve the recommendation what does it take to change it in the future. Mr. Keprios explained that a policy is not an ordinance and that a policy can change at any given City Council meeting. Mr. Keprios encouraged the Park Board to not make a recommendation at this point and perhaps direct staff to kick around some other means of feedback from the community and perhaps put an article in the Sun newspaper and ask for more input if they need more time to deliberate. He noted that this isn't something that needs to be rushed into.

Mr. Peterson asked Mr. Keprios about his thought on having a community garden along York Avenue. Mr. Keprios replied that he doubts that the YMCA would be all that disappointed in not having a community garden at that site because the YMCA is currently primarily user of that open space for their own programs. Mr. Peterson stated that he agrees with Mr. Lough and would be glad to table this for awhile to think about it.

Mr. Lough asked if perhaps staff could come up with some type of policy for the Park Board to discuss. Mr. Keprios replied he would be happy to do that and will further study the issue and have something ready by the September Park Board meeting.

Ms. Steel stated that she definitely agrees they should encourage people to use their own homes for growing organic gardens. However, as Mr. Lough pointed out we are expanding our senior housing and inviting more young families to move into the community. She indicated that something they look at as far as policy is perhaps allowing a certain age group to have priority of these gardens so that the elderly population can continue to have some of the gardens they enjoyed in their own homes.

Mr. Fronek indicated that personally he doesn't think that adopting a policy that can be changed at the September Park Board meeting makes too much sense. He noted that so far none of the locations (Pamela Park and York Park) have passed the test for us to say okay, let's invest the dollars and resources to make it happen to the extent we need a policy. He stated that they haven't seen a situation where a community garden is going to be implemented at this point. Mr. Fronek pointed out that's not to say in the future he would not say yes to a community garden project.

IV. UPDATES FROM STAFF

- A. Pamela Park Equipment – Mr. MacHolda informed the Park Board that the new playground equipment was installed at Pamela Park and it looks nice. Unfortunately, however, on the eve of the completion of the installation it was vandalized. Mr. Sorem commented that he has been to the park a few times and noted that he thinks it's one of the nicest playgrounds in the city. He commented that Ashley Swanda and Dawn Lambert, who were neighborhood committee members, were very helpful and did a wonderful job.

V. PARK BOARD COMMENTS

- A. Recycling and Solid Waste - Mr. O'Connell handed out an e-mail to the Park Board from Michelle Horan who is a member of the Recycling Solid Waste Work Group which is a subcommittee of the Energy & Environment Commission. The e-mail talks about approaching the athletic associations and presenting to them a new way of handling recycling.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm